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ABSTRACT

Noting that the previous two decades have seen Lev Vygotsky's psychology become highly influential while the psychology of other theoretical giants has faded, this book provides a major intellectual biography about Vygotsky's theories and their relationship to twentieth-century Russian and Western intellectual culture. The book traces Vygotsky's ideas to their origins in his early essays on literary criticism, Jewish culture, and psychology of art, and explicates his psychological theory of language, thought, and development. The chapters of the book are: (1) "Toward the Psychology of Art," on the cultural milieu of the 1910s and 1920s and the ideological background of the phenomenon of Vygotsky; (2) "The Psychology of Tragedy," exploring Vygotsky's essay on "Hamlet"; (3) "The Crisis of Psychology," on the beginning of Vygotsky's career as an academic psychologist; (4) "Tool and Symbol in Human Development," a systematic overview of the cultural-historical theory developed as an answer to the crisis in psychology; (5) "Thought and Language," addressing Vygotsky's study of language in its capacity as a mediating mechanism for other psychological processes and as a mental function on its own; (6) "Mind in Trouble," examining the application of Vygotsky's theory to the problems of handicapped development and psychopathology; and (7) "The Life of Ideas," examining the posthumous development of Vygotsky's ideas. Each chapter contains extensive bibliographic notes. (HTH)

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